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TAGS: SENV IS JO

SUBJECT: Jordan Notes Cool Reception for Red-Dead Project

Ref: A) Amman 4726, B) State 130427

¶1. Summary: Jordanian Ministry of Planning (MOP) Secretary General Maher Madadha told Econcouns and ESTHoff on August 31 that the GOJ has noted with concern the donor community's cool response to requests for funding of the feasibility study for the "Red-Dead" water conveyance project. The GOJ continues to push the project as the way to "rescue" the Dead Sea. End summary.

If You Think Paying for the Feasibility Study is Tough...

¶2. S/G Madadha said that the GOJ would like to see more donor support for the "Red-Dead" project to desalinate ocean water from the Red Sea for municipal use and to "rescue" the plummeting Dead Sea with the resulting brine (Ref A). He said that the French and U.S. contributions to the feasibility study (Ref B), representing about one-third of the estimated \$15.5 million cost, are still the only solid commitments. Econcouns encouraged Madadha to seek additional funding for the study from Gulf countries and from Japan, noting current USG budget constraints.

¶3. S/G Madadha said the GOJ sees the cool donor support for the feasibility study as an indicator of a lack of support for the project itself. He asked how the multibillion dollar project can happen if donors won't even pony up for the feasibility study. He described Red-Dead as an important regional (read Peace Process) and international project, not something that is just for Jordan's benefit. He said that Red-Dead would protect the Dead Sea, a unique global treasure, and deserved strong international support on that basis.

¶4. Comment: Jordan is looking past the feasibility study to the project itself. We need to keep the GoJ focused on asking the right questions and getting real answers from the feasibility study, not in moving toward a predetermined outcome.

HALE